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## THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.



### GOLD, SILVER AND GEMS.

THE JEWELERS', GOLD  
WORKERS' AND  
SILVERSMITHS' ARTS.

AMONG the arts which have been carried in the past to points of excellence not likely to be closely approached are repoussé, chasing and filigree in the precious metals, in jewelry, goldsmith's and silversmith's work.

Among striking illustrations of such work still existing may be enumerated a gold boat, with rowers of silver, found at Thebes, in the tomb of the Queen of Rameses; the Phœnician earrings disintombed from the ruins of Camyrus at Rhodes, made of fine gold, executed in embossed work and covered with filigree ornament, with the mane, mouth and ears of a lion composed of the minutest granulated balls, all separate, but the secret of uniting which is a lost art, and the golden cups of the Greek Pythias, embossed with cooking scenes and made so thin that it was impossible to take a cast from them without bruising the relief.

Perfection of execution as regards the spirit of the designs as well as workmanship is to be seen in the disks of thin gold plates set about the rim of a silver dish with scenes from the Æneid, in repoussé work, and silver stewpans, found in a Roman house at Hildesheim, having handles elegantly molded into leaf work ending in the necks of aquatic fowls.

Silver caskets in the form of temples with figures recumbent

beneath the entablatures, cups with groups, such as that of Sileni and Cupids by Rhodian goldsmiths, golden shields in repoussé, chalices and other articles attest not only the admirable character of the workmanship, but the spirit carried into their productions by the designers.

A grand contribution to surface effects in the precious metals was the art of mellatura carried to perfection by the Florentines of the Quattro cento school. This was the staining of designs on the surface of silver by means of a pigment composed of fine copper, sulphur and some silver, previously roasted. The application of enamel, opaque and transparent was carried out of old with a success which has been the envy of all succeeding times. This beautiful art, which, skilfully embodied in design, enhances so greatly gold and silver work, awaits as yet a fuller development amongst ourselves.

Incomparable is the workmanship of the crowns, yet preserved, presented by kings and emperors as votive offerings to religious shrines. Formerly gold and silversmiths' received special encouragement from the fact that their productions constituted the readiest and most safe investment of wealth in troublous times; hence the display by private individuals of tables weighing hundreds of pounds, and golden dishes as many ounces, is not to be credited to mere ostentation.

The art of modeling in the round progresses, but the spirit or life characteristic of genuine art work is too frequently absent, and many productions show a mere medley of forms. Designers of these would do well, instead of shutting themselves up in their ateliers, to take some lessons from the "open book of nature." It was in idealizing and grouping human figures in relief and in the round, that silversmiths' and goldsmiths' work in past times showed the greatest triumphs, and we have seen some fine works in this line in American ateliers. Much of the relief work for table ware is remarkable for delicacy and clear delineation.

The changes of fashion constitute the life of the jeweler's, goldsmith's and silversmith's trade. Types of design follow each other in public favor, Egyptian, Greek, Etruscan, Byzantine, Assyrian, the severely classic, then capricious mediæval fancies, successively disappear and reappear, perhaps giving way for a time to styles essentially eclectic. Then in stone setting, an art as "ancient as the hills," gems that at one time are in disfavor are at another in the ascendant. Many stones set in ancient work, as in tiaras and vases, would often seem to have been chosen, in the spirit of true art, even in gold and silver tiaras and vases, for the contrasting effects of surface rather than for other inherent value. Choice stones, irrespective of actual value, have of late gained more attention, in an artistic sense, from jewelers.

POLISHING OIL CLOTH—Equal quantities of linseed oil, beeswax and turpentine, will very handsomely polish oil cloth and improve it rather than injure it.

